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200,000 in Quebec demand:
'Education for ALL!'

By Gene Clancy

On March 1, as many as 200,000 students and their supporters poured into the streets in Montreal and other cities across Quebec to protest proposed tuition hikes by Quebec's premier, Jean Charest.

University tuition fees in Quebec will increase starting in September to a final total of $1,625 over the next five years, a 75 percent jump by 2016-2017. So far, 80,000 university and college students have joined a provincewide general strike and their numbers continue to grow, driven in part by the support of almost half of Quebecers, according to recent public opinion polls. (Globe and Mail, March 1)

PHOTO:TUITION TRUTH

Police moved in with tear gas and truncheons to disperse the thousands of students protesting outside the provincial legislature in Quebec City.

Marie-Pierre Desilets, a third-year Universite Laval student, stated that sending out the riot police was an extreme measure. "I think the fact that they were shooting pepper spray when the students are just trying to walk towards the parliament, it's kind of extreme," she said. (CTV News, March 1)

Many students carried signs saying "Education for all!" and "Education must be accessible!" (CTV News)

The historically low tuition rates at universities in Quebec and throughout Canada are the result of decades of struggle starting in the 1960s to make higher education accessible to more than the wealthiest students. Most of the protesters view the proposed tuition hikes not only as a financial hardship, but as an attack on the social fabric of Canadian society.

Widening protests

For the past several weeks, Montreal has been alive with dramatic protests. Tens of thousands took to the streets in a major demonstration on Feb. 16 — the largest strike action to date — emptying the schools of students. "Qui sème la misère, récolte la colère!" echoed off buildings on St. Catherine Street in downtown Montreal, a popular rhyming French language slogan roughly translating to "Whoever sows misery harvests anger!" (rabble.ca., Feb. 28)

About 37 students were arrested two weeks ago when they occupied a junior college in Montreal, threw objects at police officers and briefly occupied the Jacques Cartier Bridge.

A symbolic red patch, representing the student movement in Quebec, is now common on city streets, pinned to winter jackets and backpacks. Even historical landmarks are connecting with the strike movement. The illuminated cross on Mount Royal, a Montreal landmark, was draped last week with a giant red cloth.

Key to the momentum of the current Quebec student strike is significant political support from community organizations and unions. The social movement collaboration is represented in the Coalition opposée à la tarification et à la privatisation des services publics [Coalition Against the Tariff and the Privatization of Public Services], a coalition that moved to blockade the Montreal stock exchange for several hours on Feb. 16.

On a sunny, winter morning, hundreds of protesters locked arms and formed a human chain across the doors to the Stock Exchange. It was a protest in support of the student struggle against tuition hikes but also against policy shifts toward the privatization

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WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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WW panels at Left Forum

By John Catalinotto
New York

Organizers of the Left Forum announced on March 1 that author and documentary film maker Michael Moore will address the conference. The theme of this year's Forum is "Occupy the System: Confronting Global Capitalism." The Forum is an annual conference where ideas are discussed by socialist or socialist-sympathizing academics and activists.

There will be 400 panels at this year's Forum, which is scheduled the weekend of March 16-18 at Pace University in downtown Manhattan near the Brooklyn Bridge subway station. Last year there were 300 panels. The schedule for all panels and plenaries is available at www.leftforum.org.

Workers World newspaper is organizing three panels. WW will also have a literature table to introduce Marxist books, newspapers and pamphlets to participants. In addition, Workers World Party First Secretary Larry Holmes will represent WWP among seven political tendencies that will discuss their organizing work on a panel entitled **"Party Building and Organizing on the Left"** at 5 p.m. on March 17 in Room W626.

LeiLani Dowell, a managing editor of WW, will join Occupy Wall Street activist Caleb Maupin and organizer of the "Peoples Power Tour" and former student organizer Larry Hales for the panel **"Socialism in the United States: Is It Possible?"** One point they will discuss is the relationship between the categories defined by the Occupy Wall Street movement — 1% vs. 99% — and Marxist categories in the class struggle. This panel will take place March 18 at 10 a.m. in room W616.

WW managing editor Monica Moorehead, who is also editor of the book "Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle," will join former president of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 1707 and Million Worker March Movement activist Brenda Stokeley and Fred Goldstein, author of "Low-Wage Capitalism" (2009) and the forthcoming book "Capitalism at a Dead End" for a panel called **"Is Capitalism at a Dead End? Socialist Revolutions in a Time of Crisis."** The panel is scheduled for March 17 at 3 p.m. in room W624.

WW Editor Deirdre Griswold, Joyce Chediac, editor of the book "Gaza, Symbol of Resistance," and Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of the Pan African News Wire, will speak on a panel entitled **"Confronting Global Capitalism's Attempt to Recolonize Africa and Asia."** This panel will survey aggression directed from Washington to points in East Asia, Central Asia, Southwest Asia (the Middle East) and Africa. It will also take up controversial issues like how the anti-war movement should relate to the struggle over Libya, Syria, Iran and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea. It is scheduled for March 18 at 10 a.m. in room W607.

Azikiwe is also participating in a panel later that day called "Unite the Global 99% to Fight Imperialism, the Root Cause of Crisis and War." That is scheduled at 3 p.m. in room W520.

All WW panels are organized for about 45 minutes of presentation, followed by up to 65 minutes of discussion.

Lynne Stewart supporters pack hearing

By Sara Flounders
New York

Supporters of human-rights champion and "people's attorney" Lynne Stewart packed the courtroom in downtown Manhattan to overflowing for her Feb. 29 hearing. They were there to show support for an appeal to reduce the 10-year prison sentence Stewart began serving two years ago. Her supporters were so numerous that many could not even get into the courtroom.

The entire case against Stewart is about a wildly fabricated charge of aiding terrorism based on a press release issued 12 years ago for a convicted former client, Sheik Omar Rahman. Stewart, Ramsey Clark and Abdeen Jabara were the lawyers who defended the sheik, a blind Egyptian Muslim leader who was convicted of "seditious conspiracy" in 1995.

In the frantic, right-wing atmosphere following Sept. 11, 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft had federal agents arrest Stewart in April 2002 without warning and charged her with crimes that were not even on the books at the time the press release was issued. After a nine-month trial in 2005, Stewart was sentenced in 2006 by Judge John G. Koeltl to 28 months in federal prison.

A three-person panel of judges in the Appeals Court for the Second Circuit later insisted that Stewart's penalty be increased. Judge Koeltl, under pressure from his peers and from the media, quadrupled her original sentence to 10 years. The Feb. 29 appeals hearing was before the same Second Circuit court, which had no immediate response.

At a rally after the hearing, Stewart's spouse Ralph Poynter spoke, as did Chairman Fred Hampton Jr. of the Black Panther Party, international human-rights activist Ramsey Clark, longtime anti-war activist Ralph Schoenman, and Sara Flounders. They pledged and urged continuing support for Stewart.

WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS
Ramsey Clark, Ralph Poynter and Fred Hampton, Jr.

It is such mobilizations of love and solidarity in the streets that will help keep 72-year-old Stewart alive as legal challenges and a new appeal are raised.

The determination to continue the struggle to appeal this outrageous sentence and free Lynne Stewart is enormous.

Read Lynne Stewart's open letter at workers.org.

The writer is a co-director of the International Action Center, a main organizer of support activities for Stewart.

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The roots of inequality, part 2

Wealth distribution and capitalism

Following is the second part of a chapter on inequality excerpted from Fred Goldstein's upcoming book "Capitalism at a Dead End." The first part, which appeared in last week's issue of WW under the headline "Inequality, capitalism and socialist revolution," took up "Capitalism and the roots of inequality." This concluding section deals with "The character of wealth distribution [as it] flows from the mode of production."

The fact of the matter is that inequality in distribution flows from the system of production for profit. Or, as Marxists put it, relations of distribution flow from relations of production. It is private property in the means of production and services that determines the distribution of social wealth. No amount of redistribution of wealth under capitalism, through government spending, union contracts or any other method, can overcome the class inequality that flows from the right of the capitalists to own not only the means of production, but all the products of production.

In this regard, an analysis that Karl Marx wrote in 1847 is helpful. Marx was trying to debunk the argument that labor and capital have a common interest in the growth of capitalism. The essay "Wage Labour and Capital" was written based on lectures to class-conscious German workers who were first getting organized. Marx wrote:

"We have thus seen that even the most favorable situation for the working class, namely, the most rapid growth of capital, however much it may improve the material life of the worker, does not abolish the antagonism between his interests and the interests of the capitalist. Profit and wages remain as before, in inverse proportion.

"If capital grows rapidly, wages may rise, but the profit of capital rises disproportionately faster. The material position of the worker has improved, but at the cost of his social position. The social chasm that separates him from the capitalist has widened.

"Finally, to say that 'the most favorable condition for wage-labor is the fastest possible growth of productive capital' is the same as to say: the quicker the working class multiplies and augments the power inimical to it — the wealth of another which lords over that class — the more favorable will be the conditions under which it will be permitted to toil anew at the multiplication of bourgeois wealth, at the enlargement of the power of capital, content thus to forge for itself the golden chains by which the bourgeoisie drags it in its train." (Marxist Internet Archive)

Much of Marx's essay is devoted to showing that no matter what the relative condition of the workers is under the system of capitalist exploitation — whether they are higher paid or lower paid — even when they are in a good bargaining position because the boss needs them to keep expanding production, the workers constantly lose ground in relation to the capitalists, who grow immensely in wealth. So the systematic increase in inequality between the classes is built into the system of exploitation itself. Furthermore, the working class, at best, is forever confined to trying to "forge the golden chains by which the bourgeoisie drags it in its train."

Marx then goes on to show that the so-called prosperity of the workers is a lie, because the bosses use every method to lower wages, even in so-called good times.

Capitalism in the age of the scientific-technological revolution and imperialist globalization has expanded and evolved by leaps and bounds since the days of Marx. The working classes in the imperialist countries are on a downward course and their wages are falling. They are losing ground not only relatively but absolutely.

Workers are no longer inching forward in their standard of living while the capitalists race ahead. Wages are going down. Conditions are getting worse. The bosses have engineered a worldwide wage competition between the workers in the centers of capitalism and the hundreds of millions of workers in low-wage countries. The bosses have used offshoring along with technology and the exploitation of immigrant workers to promote this competition. The global reserve army of unemployed and underemployed has grown to hundreds of millions. Workers are under pressure on every continent.

In the U.S. wages have been going down since the 1970s. (Perry L. Weed, "Inequality, the Middle Class & the Fading American Dream") The gross inequality we see today arises from the absolute decline of wages. The lion's share of new wealth goes to the financiers and corporate owners in increasing quantities of surplus value (unpaid labor) in the form of money.

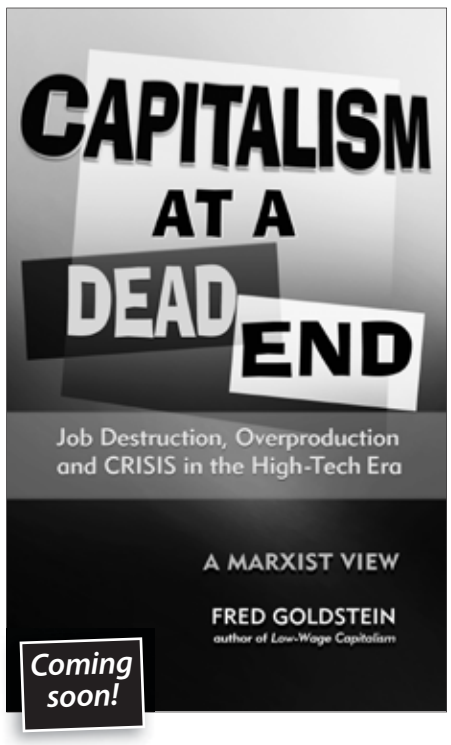
It is urgent to try to reverse the absolute decline of the conditions of the proletariat and the oppressed. The fight against the growth of obscene inequality must continue and escalate.

Corporate wealth creates extreme personal wealth

But it is important to note that the obscene inequality in personal income pales in comparison to the corporate wealth controlled, not by the 1%, but a tiny fraction of the 1% who sit on the boards of directors of the banks and the giant transnational corporations. This is what Lenin called finance capital — the small group of corporations that control trillions in corporate wealth and most of the production of the world's wealth.

A recent study shows that 147 corporations dominate 40 percent of the world's corporate wealth. ("Financial world dominated by a few deep pockets," ScienceNews, Sept. 24) Private ownership and control of vast corporate and financial wealth by the summits of the ruling class are what lie behind the inordinate personal wealth doled out to the CEOs of the Fortune 500 and the wealthy of the world — the administrators, stockholders and bondholders of capital and finance.

Thus the question is, shall we stop at the fight to lessen inequality under capitalism, shall we fight to help forge the "golden chains by which capital" drags labor, or shall we carry the fight against inequality to its ultimate conclusion and fight to break the chains of class domination altogether? Inequality between the classes can only be abolished by getting rid of the capitalist class altogether and the system of exploitation upon which all their obscene wealth is built. □



At W.E.B. DuBois celebration

A discussion with Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Jamila K. Wilson
Philadelphia

From Feb. 24 to 25 at Temple University in the historically Black neighborhood of North Philadelphia, scholars, activists, community leaders and students convened on the anniversary of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois' 144th birthday. They celebrated not only DuBois' life as a scholar activist, but the prolific contribution of our modern scholar activist and political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal.

"W.E.B. DuBois, Africana Studies, and The Human Future: A Symposium" was a two-day conference sponsored by the Africana Studies department, where academics and activists spoke on panels discussing such broad topics as philosophy, the color line, war and peace, capitalism and race, activism and social transformation.

Individuals from up and down the Eastern Seaboard delivered astute analyses on current public policies and international affairs, providing the diverse audience with an alternative narrative that seldom receives a platform in mainstream media today.

Conference organizer Dr. Anthony Monteiro shared in his opening remarks, "We are going to keep this like a community thing; it's all in the family — in the family of struggle, in the family of resistance, in the family of those that seek to know in order to change the world."

As profound and engaging as all the speakers were, the keynote and highlight of the conference was a 25-minute prerecorded presentation by Mumia Abu-Jamal from SCI Mahanoy state prison. His presentation was followed by a live 20-minute question-and-answer session with Abu-Jamal from the prison via telephone. This was Abu-Jamal's first public speaking event since his release from death row in December 2011 and subsequent transfer to general population after being detained for seven weeks in restrictive housing, also known as "the hole."

Dr. Monteiro, who is revered as a preeminent DuBoisian scholar, said Abu-Jamal's address on Dr. DuBois was one of the best analyses he has ever heard, "I'm not exaggerating when I say Mumia is a genius."

Abu-Jamal's admiration for Dr. DuBois as a scholar activist was paramount as he stated in part: "DuBois was such a very deep thinker that his books are written in layers; that is, every time you read his books you learn something new. He wrote in a very deep way. I had read 'Dark Waters' years ago, I had read 'The Education of Black People' years ago, but to reread those texts you get a richer understanding of how brilliant, how remarkable, how insightful Dr. DuBois was."

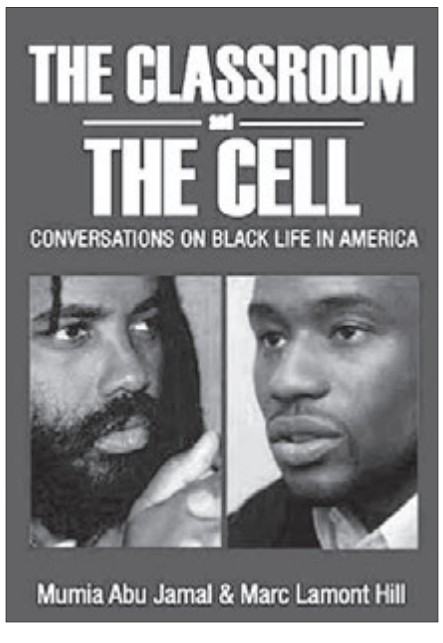
The audience of over 300 people had a chance to raise a number of issues with Abu-Jamal during the question-and-answer section of the program. When asked what his message to today's youth would be, Abu-Jamal responded: "When you go to college or when you're studying independently, or when you are reading; wherever you are, study seriously. Study deeply and use it for the most important thing you can do, which is your people's freedom."

Through the duration of the phone call, Abu-Jamal maintained an upbeat and positive demeanor. Michael Coard, a Philadelphia attorney, asked him when he was coming home, and with a jovial response, he said, "I'd like to say ASAP, but it ain't on me!"

Abu-Jamal challenged the audience to stay connected to the family and friends that were currently incarcerated to help support and motivate them. He reminded the audience of words from Malcolm X when asked how he maintains his spiritual fortitude in such a hostile environment: "As long as you are born south of the Canadian border, you are in prison. That's a reality; Oscar Grant was not on death row, or was he?"

Abu-Jamal left the audience with much to think and reflect upon. After the call, Dr. Marc Lamont Hill shared a few words about his experience writing his co-authored book with Abu-Jamal, called "The Classroom and the Cell." The audience appeared quite enthused by the presentation as represented by the long line of people waiting to get a signed copy of the book.

Those interested in seeing video clips of the conference can check out this website, vimeo.com/37877743. □



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Heroes of 2008 occupation reoccupy same plant & win again

By Martha Grevatt

On Dec. 5, 2008, workers at a Chicago factory made history. When the Republic Windows and Doors management told them, with no advance notice, that they were out of a job and had lost their health benefits, 260 members of United Electrical Workers Local 1110 occupied the plant.

Six days later the union, whose mainly Latino/a and African-American membership includes many undocumented workers, announced victory. The $1.75 million settlement allowed workers to be paid 60 days' pay and benefits. Republic was legally obligated to pay that under the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, but it had been refusing to pay that because Bank of America would not loan them the money.

On Feb. 23 of this year, history repeated itself, but with a variation. When Serious Energy, the current owner, told workers the plant would close without notice, once again they occupied — and won. This time, however, Local 1110 won more than 60 days' pay and benefits. After an occupation lasting only 11 hours, Serious' management — which this time voluntarily offered to pay workers what they were due under WARN — agreed instead to keep the plant open and running for 90 days.

When Serious Energy first bought the former Republic plant in February 2009, it was big news. The California-based manufacturer of environmentally sustainable construction products stated that all the workers would be rehired. The sale was announced the same month that Local 1110 leaders completed a cross-country victory tour where widespread sympathy and admiration were expressed for the sit-downers.

Local 1110 President Armando Robles told Workers World on Feb. 24 of this year that Serious was capitalizing on Republic workers' popularity to bolster its image as a progressive, green company.

Local 1110 Vice President Melvin "Ricky" MacLin told WW, "But in the end, a boss is still a boss." In fact, only 75 of the workers were ever rehired. At the time of this year's takeover, the workforce was down to just 38 employees due to two prior layoffs.

When Robles and the Local 1110 leadership were summoned to a Feb. 23 meeting at the office of the anti-union law firm Seyfarth Shaw, which represented Serious, the company refused to tell them the purpose of the meeting. Given how slow business was, the workers knew they could be facing another plant closing. The day before the meeting, the union called all the workers in the plant together to prepare for a possible showdown.

It wasn't until the morning of Feb. 23, when the union negotiating committee sat down with management and Serious' lawyers, that the plant closing was announced. Production was to cease that very day at 2 p.m. when the shift ended. Equipment was scheduled to leave the plant immediately for other Serious facilities in Pennsylvania and Colorado.

Unanimous vote to occupy plant

"We told them they had a moral obligation to keep the plant open," said Robles. "We argued for hours." This time the union was not going to settle for 60 days' pay, benefits, and no future. They wanted to keep the plant open, with nothing moving out, for 60 days plus another 30. This would give them time to look for a new owner — possibly themselves.

Around 12:30 p.m., some of the union leadership went back to the plant and conducted a vote. The workers voted unanimously to stay in the plant when the shift ended. Immediately the word went out to laid-off plant workers, some of whom joined the occupation inside. Supporters were called upon, via phone, email and Facebook, to stand outside in solidarity. Hundreds showed up at a moment's notice.

MacLin stressed, "The Occupy Chicago people were diligent. They were out there in the rain and the cold the whole time." Police tried to prevent pizza — which Occupy Chicago bought for the workers — from getting inside the plant. When the crowd chanted, "Let the workers eat," the police gave in. Supporters also bought tacos for the workers. When there was more food than the sit-downers could eat, they sent tacos back outside for the Occupy Chicago supporters.

Police threatened to evict the sit-downers, but the workers refused to budge. They announced that anyone who wanted to leave was free to do so. "We told them no one was being forced to stay in there against their will," said Robles.

Around 10 p.m., the police ordered Occupy Chicago to take down a "tent" — really a canopy protecting protesters from the heavy rain — and they refused. Reinforcements came back with actual tents, which they set up for a possible encampment, and sleeping bags, which they gave to the workers inside.

Finally, at around 1 a.m. on Feb. 24, Serious agreed to the workers' core demand to keep the workers and the equipment in the plant for 90 days.

"This gives us time to look for a new buyer or look into running the factory under workers' control," Robles explained. "We don't need a boss. In fact, we tried to argue with the supervisors when the new company took over, when we saw they were making mistakes. We know how to do our jobs."

When asked why the occupation tactic is effective, Robles said, "When you occupy, you send a message that a company cannot abuse the workers." MacLin added, "When you occupy they know you are serious. If we have an argument and you take off your coat, I know to get ready for a fight. When we occupy we are saying we are willing to fight. And we are known to occupy." □

Locked-out Steelworkers return to work

By Martha Grevatt
Findlay, Ohio

On Nov. 28, Cooper Tire & Rubber Company locked out 1,051 members of United Steelworkers Local 207L, who were working at the company's plant in Findlay, Ohio. Workers found themselves out in the cold that day, less than a month after their previous contract expired and the union refused to agree to management's final offer.

This week the workers are beginning to return to work after ratifying a five-year contract on Feb. 28 that turns back some of Cooper's most egregious demands. However, the company did win some concessions from the workers. One-third of the 948 Steelworkers who voted on the contract voted "no."

Cooper forced to back down on five-tier pay scale

One of the key issues that led to the impasse between the union and management was a two-tier pay scale. Under the previous agreement, workers hired in 2009 and after could only make 80 percent of the hourly rate of higher seniority workers. Compared to recently ratified contracts between the United Auto Workers and Detroit auto companies that have second-tier pay capped at roughly two-thirds of the "traditional" rate, 80 percent is relatively high. In lower-paying departments, however, the lower rate is not much more than $11 an hour.

The Steelworkers wanted to eliminate two-tier pay altogether, while Cooper bosses wanted a five-tier pay structure. The result is that lower-paid workers will now get raises bringing them up to 85 percent of the higher rate. However, following the regressive pattern set by UAW contracts, second-tier workers will not receive a defined benefit pension plan, but will instead have 401(k) accounts.

A company demand to reevaluate classifications and "adjust" — meaning lower — overall pay rates was defeated, but workers will pay more for health insurance. Cost-of-living bonuses will be paid each year of the five-year contract.

No one, not even Local 207L President Rodney Nelson, is cheering the agreement. "We did the very best we could," he said. (Toledo Blade, Feb. 28) Linda Jones was one of the workers who voted "no." Jones, with 34 years at Cooper, explained, "It hurts the young people. You gotta stand up for what's right for everybody; it's just not about you." (In These Times, Feb. 29)

Jones was participating in the Journey for Justice tour, along with workers locked out by Crystal Sugar in North Dakota, when she heard about the settlement. The tour, which began in Fargo, N.D., was originally scheduled to arrive in Findlay for a "hands around the plant" solidarity action Feb. 27.

Journey for Justice is the latest example of a movement that was growing in support of the locked-out Steelworkers. A December rally in Findlay drew thousands from around Ohio and neighboring states. Support actions were held outside 125 Cooper dealerships around the U.S. on Jan. 14, and thousands of union members signed e-petitions demanding Cooper end the lockout.

Cooper Tire workers in Serbia and other countries sent solidarity messages in the first weeks of the dispute. Local 207L members traveled to Serbia to meet with their counterparts.

All this pressure helped to force the company to improve its earlier "final" offer and give up on the outrageous proposal for five tiers of pay. □

Homeowners expose illegal foreclosures

WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

By Terri Kay
Sacramento

California homeowners who have had their homes foreclosed marched with their supporters from Caesar Chavez Park to the Capitol Building in Sacramento on Feb. 29. Their goal was to deliver documents from foreclosed homes, demonstrating broken chains of title that made the foreclosures illegal. The activists held a rally at the Capitol and then proceeded to a Wells Fargo Bank, where they rallied again, chanting, "Banks got bailed out, we got sold out."

The Bay Area Moratorium — a group mostly of Latinos/as centered in east Contra Costa County — together with Occupy Sacramento and supporters from San Jose, Occupy San Francisco and Occupy Oakland led the march in search of justice for the foreclosed homeowners.

Finally, BAM and Occupy Sacramento marched to Attorney General Kamala Harris' office building. They had a box full of evidence to present to her, showing the broken chains of title. The building was locked down, but the marchers chanted until a representative came down to accept and time-stamp the documents.

Delia Aguilar, one of the protest group's leaders, demanded that Harris declare an immediate statewide moratorium on foreclosures until she was able to audit all County Recorders for truthful and accurate title chain documentation. She said these fraudulent documents are used by banks to illegally auction off foreclosed properties.

BAM has been active in taking direct action to prevent evictions and move evicted homeowners back into their homes in Oakley, Antioch and other parts of the Bay Area. □

Tornadoes, acid oceans and insurance companies

By Deirdre Griswold

The tornado season in the United States started early this year — a whole season early. Winter's grip was still on the land when deadly twisters in the Midwest and South disintegrated homes and flung people and animals around like rag dolls. Like everything else about the weather these days, that broke all kinds of records.

The number of tornadoes was mind-boggling: More than 100 of them coiled and roared over 12 states, killing 40 people. It happened three weeks before the start of spring. Thousands picking through the rubble of their broken homes days later shivered as snow fell.

A huge swath of the United States was affected, from Nebraska to South Carolina, from Mississippi to Ohio. The Feb. 29-March 3 storm system was so large and powerful that debris sucked up by a twister in Henryville, Ind., was later found 68 miles away.

Such tragic scenes are becoming all too familiar as the planet warms and weather patterns are disrupted. Stunned survivors call out for help, while frustrated scientists who know only too well the cause of such disasters plead with increased urgency for government action to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Scores of international conferences have been held with little political result. Let's not forget that the U.S., with just 5 percent of the world's population, is responsible for 25 percent of the accumulated carbon dioxide gas warming the planet. But the capitalist government in Washington is too busy waging wars and cutting social benefits to pay much attention to the problem of global warming, even when it strikes so close to home. In fact, many elected representatives — who represent first and foremost the powerful energy companies that profit off oil, natural gas and coal — still profess the thoroughly discredited view that global warming doesn't exist.

Insurance industry weighs in

Will that change now that the insurance industry has weighed in, calling on the government to do something about climate change?

On March 1, one day after the latest outbreak of tornadoes began, insurance industry representatives spoke at a press conference in Washington organized by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent, and Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democrat. Present were people from the Reinsurance Association of America, the firms Willis Re and Swiss Re, and the nonprofit organization Ceres.

"As a member of the global insurance industry, we have witnessed the increased impact of weather-related events on our industry and around the world," said Mark Way, head of Swiss Re's sustainability and climate change activities in the Americas. "A warming climate will only add to this trend of increasing losses, which is why action is needed now." (Insurance Networking News, March 2)

What has led the insurance industry to take on the lies and misinformation spread by the energy industry? Profits — or rather the threat of losing them. In other words, the capitalist insurance industry is driven by the same motive as the capitalist energy industry. But in this case their interests collide head-on.

And those speaking at the press conference made no bones about it. Their unusual activism is all about money, they said. In the 1980s, insurers paid out an average of $3 billion a year on claims related to weather-caused damage. That number went up to $20 billion a year by the end of the last decade. And it continues to rise.

"Property and casualty insurers in the United States experienced an estimated $44 billion in losses last year when hurricanes, droughts, tornadoes and other natural disasters were more severe, longer, more frequent and less predictable than in the past," said Insurance Networking News in its report on the press conference. What the insurance companies are looking for is government money to make up their losses.

This is not the first time that the insurance industry has lobbied against practices that cut its profits and drove up the price of premiums. While health advocates warned for decades about the deadly risks of smoking, it took the intervention of insurers for the government to intervene and ban smoking in public places. Again, it was all about profits — something that capitalist politicians can understand.

Don't bet on market forces

Could this happen again? Don't bet on it. The problem of tobacco was very small compared to the problem of global warming, and the energy industry is much more powerful, with strong ties to banking and the military. Plus, the change effected was primarily in individual behavior — stopping smoking. But no matter how conscientious individuals try to be with regard to climate change — driving cars with better mileage, riding bikes and walking to work — it's all a drop in the bucket.

What is needed to slow down, much less reverse, global warming is a massive reorganization of production, transportation and housing simultaneously with seeking and developing new sources of energy and energy conservation.

Meanwhile, the situation grows more dire. The magazine Science just published an alarming report by 21 scientists on the acidification of the oceans. One of its authors, Andy Ridgwell of Bristol University, said, "The geological record suggests that the current acidification is potentially unparalleled in at least the last 300 million years of Earth history, and raises the possibility that we are entering an unknown territory of marine ecosystem change."

The increasing acidity of the oceans comes directly from the release of carbon dioxide. One quarter of the gas is absorbed by sea water, where it is converted into carbonic acid.

There is no lack of evidence that a planetwide disaster is unfolding. And the cause is right here at home. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of people cannot get jobs as the capitalist system sheds workers and cuts needed services.

Clearly, time is growing short for a revolutionary reconstruction of society. No band-aids can do the job. Only by defying bourgeois property rules can the working class — the vast majority, the 99%, many of whom have no future under capitalism — take over and control the world's immense productive apparatus that exists so that socialist planning can begin to convert it to meet human needs and save the planet. □

Republicans step up right-wing campaign

By David Sole

A revolting outpouring of racism, sexism, anti-lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer bigotry, religious intolerance and general ignorance finally came to an end in Michigan on Feb. 28 when the polling booths closed on the Republican primary. Mitt Romney pulled ahead of Rick Santorum. Counting Ron Paul's and Newt Gingrich's tallies, fewer than 1 million people, out of the over 7 million who were eligible, voted in this primary.

Santorum promoted an end to separation of church and state, attacked LGBTQ rights and virtually condemned those seeking a college education, leaving many to wonder who he was talking to.

As he campaigned in a state with massive unemployment, hundreds of thousands of homes lost to foreclosures and child poverty at an all-time high, Romney called for tax breaks for the rich and for overturning medical coverage for the poorest.

For weeks before the primary, people in Michigan were bombarded with millions of dollars in campaign ads promoting Romney and Santorum. The two leading Republicans reportedly spent $6 million just for television ads. (thetelegraph.com) Additional millions went into other media and campaign meetings across the state. Major print and electronic media also gave free, extensive and uncritical coverage to the views of these extremists.

But it wasn't only Democrats, progressives and community activists who were disgusted by the performance of the Republicans' top candidates. The New York Times, representing a powerful section of the U.S. ruling class, felt compelled to write an editorial on Feb. 29 attacking Romney and Santorum, noting that their reactionary campaigns "were completely disconnected from the lives of middle-class voters and pushed ever farther to the right margins of American politics."

Romney was criticized for opposing taxes on the rich and calling for cuts to social programs. The editorial repeatedly expressed concern for the poor, the workers and the middle class, and sympathized with families who "suffered a job loss" or fear one and with "those whose unemployment insurance is about to run out."

The editorial ends with praise for President Barack Obama's "fiery speech to the United Auto Workers" on Feb. 28. It approvingly quoted his statement that "hardworking men and women" are not "special interests."

WW Commentary

A warning to the capitalists

But has the New York Times, in its entire lengthy existence, ever really supported the poor, the workers or the unions? It has often referred to unions as special interests and been for tax and spending policies that favor the rich. Why preach something different now?

As an organ of the more intelligent section of the ruling class, the Times is warning the capitalist class that the Republican Party is jeopardizing its future as a mass party by moving further and further to the right. The nod to Obama in the editorial ends with the Times pointing out that the president recently polled 18 percentage points above Romney in Michigan.

The Times isn't worried about Obama's appeal to the workers and oppressed. Militant talk sprinkled with some empty promises has kept the working class captive to the Democratic Party and (mostly) out of the streets. At the same time, Obama has served the Wall Street crowd very well in economic and foreign policy, including imperialist war.

It is telling that the Times editorial was entitled, "Romney Wins, the Middle Class Loses." These days some union leaders and others talk about restoring the middle class. They falsely or confusingly identify workers who receive decent wages and benefits as part of the "middle class" and are hesitant to speak plainly about the working class.

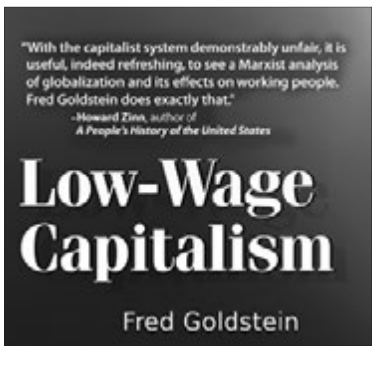
But the Times is not confusing the working class with the real middle class — professionals, small business people and some farmers. It has no problem using the term workers or "blue-collar voters" in referring to the working class. No, the Times is specifically warning its class that a major base of the Republican Party, the middle class, may be shifting away from the ultraright campaign currently being waged.

Finally, the Times cannot be entirely happy that Obama talks about taxing the rich and spending more for the poor, even if it is pure demagogy. Such talk, the ruling class knows very well, might encourage the working class to take this program seriously and take it into the streets. Allied with growing sections of the alienated, shrinking and increasingly hard-pressed middle class, the working class could bypass the two-party electoral system and become an independent force on a massive scale.

The Occupy Wall Street movement burst onto the scene last fall and rapidly drew in sections of the working-class and union movement across the U.S. Large-scale union support for the occupiers in New York City and elsewhere did not go unnoticed among the Wall Street power elite. The general strike in Oakland, Calif., on Nov. 2 made them quake in their boots.

With no answer to the mass unemployment and underemployment wracking the workers and oppressed — and with no solution to their worldwide capitalist economic crisis — the ruling class is closely monitoring this year's elections for any sign of where the next uprising will come from.

The writer is a City of Detroit worker and past president of UAW Local 2334.



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MARCH 1 PROTESTS: 'EDUCATION –

MILWAUKEE

WW PHOTOS: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

'No student debt'

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee

The Education Rights Coalition at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee sponsored protests on campus March 1 on the National Day of Action for Education Rights. ERC includes members of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 82; the Milwaukee Graduate Assistants Association, American Federal of Teachers Local 2169; and Students for a Democratic Society.

The activists began by distributing literature on austerity measures imposed on students throughout the UW system. Tuition has doubled in 10 years, while faculty, staff and students are reeling from a $250 million state budget cut to the UW system, the largest such reduction in state history.

UW-Milwaukee, where students work the longest hours at any state campus and where the most students, staff and faculty of color are based, was singled out for even more cuts by pro-Wall Street state legislators and Gov. Scott Walker. Meanwhile, UW top administrators are getting big raises above their already six-figure salaries.

At an on-campus speak-out at Spaights Plaza, activists denounced the education cutbacks and called for slashing the pay of UW top administrators, an immediate tuition freeze, cancellation of student loan debt, an active role for ERC members in UW-Milwaukee budget decisions, and administration discussions with campus workers about working conditions.

While hoisting banners and signs, students, faculty, campus workers and community members marched to the Chancellor's building and through the Student Union chanting, "Education should be free," "Bail out students not banks," "No remorse, no regret, we won't pay our student debt!" and "Education is a right."

They marched to a room where a provost candidate was about to speak, then picketed with banners and signs. Students confronted him about his large salary and potential $80,000 raise if he got the appointment, at the same that time austerity measures are implemented. They also held teach-ins there on how to fight education cutbacks and mobilize for funds for public education and not prisons.

ERC members concluded the protest with discussion in the Student Union about how to organize against the austerity measures. They called this day of action the beginning of their fightback.

Bryan G. Pfeifer is a UW-Milwaukee alumni and WI Bail Out the People Movement organizer.

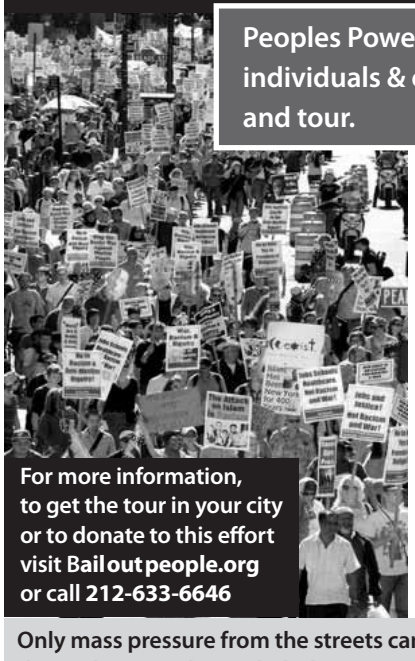
BAY AREA, CALIF.

MARCH 5: 'Occupy the Capitol'

On March 1, Occupy Education California called for local actions building up to the March 5 statewide Occupy the Capitol event. Students from Laney College and the University of California at Berkeley marched to Oscar Grant Plaza in Oakland. Some went on to march to the State Capitol, planning to arrive for the March 5 event. The students' statement said in part: "We refuse to pay for the crisis created by the 1%. We refuse to accept the dismantling of our schools and universities, while the banks and corporations make record profits. We refuse to accept educational resegregation, massive tuition increases, outrageous student debt, and increasing privatization and corporatization."

—Photo and caption by Terri Kay

NATIONAL TOUR TO BUILD PEOPLES POWER



For more information, to get the tour in your city or to donate to this effort visit Bailoutpeople.org or call 212-633-6646

Peoples Power is the common theme uniting diverse individuals & organizations in a national discussion and tour. Join us beginning in:

- **NYC** ..... Sunday **March 11**
- **Philadelphia**.. Monday **March12**
- **Baltimore** .... Tuesday **March 13**
- **LA** ..... Sunday **March 18**

NEW YORK CITY ▸ SUN., March 11 at 4 pm
Judson Church, 55 Washington Square S, NY, NY.
▸Cynthia McKinney; Larry Holmes of Occupy 4 Jobs; Victor Toro; Vanessa Fluker; Tour organizer Larry Hales; activists from the housing, immigrant rights, postal workers, other trade unionists, BAYAN-USA and the OWS Occupy movement.

PHILADELPHIA ▸ Mon., March 12 at 6:30 pm
Calvary United UMC at 48th St & Baltimore Ave.
▸Cynthia McKinney; Pam Africa; Anthony Monteiro; Larry Hales; Berta Joubert and Occupy activists.

BALTIMORE ▸ Tues., March 13 at 6 pm,
Workers United Union Hall, 7-9 W. Mulberry St.,
▸Cynthia McKinney; Rev. CD Cortly Witherspoon, Pres. SCLC, Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Andre Powell from Baltimore Labor Council and Occupy4Jobs.

LOS ANGELES ▸ Sun., March 18 at 4 pm
Campus of the Univ. of Southern California (USC)
▸Cynthia McKinney; Clarence Thomas of ILWU Longshore Workers Local 10, San Francisco/ Oakland; Kuusela Hilo of BAYAN-USA; John Parker; Ron Gochez – Union del Barrio; Southern California Immigration Coalition.

Plus many, many other local events and peoples struggles. LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!

1) Encourage a nationwide discussion on developing a PEOPLES POWER program demanding jobs, housing and education, an end to all social inequalities including racism, sexism and LGBTQ bigotry, the massive deportations and imperialist war. Let's target the root of these ills — the capitalist system.

2) **Call for participation in a national Speak-Out on capitalism's crimes of unemployment, low wages, foreclosures, police and ICE terror, racist incarcerations, hunger and homelessness.** Schools, post offices, hospitals, clinics and housing are being destroyed to guarantee corporate profits. Millions of people are laid off and thrown away.

▸ **Be in Washington, D.C. for MUMIA Abu-Jamal on April 24th in D.C.**

Only mass pressure from the streets can bring the change that is desperately needed. The National Tour for Peoples Power will discuss many upcoming struggles — such as:

- **Sat., March 17 at 2 pm Community-Labor United for Postal Jobs & Services Rally & March,** NYC Main Post Office 32 St. & 8th Ave.
- The annual massive **MAY DAY – Day without the 99% Marches on May 1st** for worker & immigrant rights.
- **National opposition to the NATO meeting** of war criminals – international 1% in Chicago. **Peoples Summit and Mass March May 19 or 20.**

— NOT INCARCERATION'

People's Power needed to save our schools

By a District 14 teacher
Williamsburg, Brooklyn

The struggle over public education in New York City reflects everything going on in today's high-tech, low-wage, capitalist system. The bankers' class, desperate for new markets, covets the over-a-billion-dollar school budget. As with other public services, the trend is to outsource, mechanize and privatize while attempting to weaken unions.

Billionaire NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg maneuvered to assume mayoral control of the Department of Education in 2002, and has been handing contracts and positions to his cronies ever since. Charter schools backed by private equity and hedge funds have taken over some of the best facilities inside public school buildings, rent free. For-profit chains such as "Success Academy" cynically capitalize on the frustration many families have with inadequate learning conditions created in public schools by decades of top-down racist neglect.

The Southside of Williamsburg, Brooklyn [Los Sures], is one community that is looking within for solutions. They are demanding self-determination about what school programs their children need. A longstanding working-class, Latino/a community — with elected officials who reflect the population and award-winning educators — the Southside was not consulted when the DOE decided to 'consider' placing a SA elementary school inside MS 50, a public middle school, despite the existence of four under-enrolled elementary schools nearby.

Critics charge that the corporate schools exclude students for whom extra resources are needed to address language or learning differences. At existing SA sites, only two percent to five percent of students are English Language Learners; District 14, where MS 50 resides, has 30 percent ELL students. Similar discrepancies exist for special needs students who win the lottery for SA. Parents have testified that either upon mentioning their child's mandated services, or shortly after they start school, they are counseled to go elsewhere. This means back to the public schools, which average at least 16 percent students with disabilities.

Williamsburg's PS 84 has a Dual Language immersion program, proven to help students of either English or Spanish become truly bilingual. Advocates insist that the district needs more Dual Language programs, not an English-only charter that will siphon off space and resources from public schools.

Schools, churches, politicians and housing groups in the area have formed Southside Community Schools Coalition to resist the attack on local schools, which they frame as part of the real estate developers' plan to "phase out our community." (scscbrooklyn.wordpress.com)

In a telling move, SA used $1.6 million — of the profits accrued from its other 11 schools! — for an advertising campaign directed at the Northside, where the rents are already higher. This backfired when a group of mostly white parents, offended by the overkill recruitment tactics, formed Williamsburg and Greenpoint Parents for Our Public Schools and joined SCSC at rallies and hearings.

The schools issue has been incorporated into cultural celebrations on Three Kings' Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day and into discussions by teens in afterschool programs run by the progressive El Puente center. It was the focus of a Feb. 7 town hall meeting in between the DOE-sponsored hearings.

Aside from mobilizing hundreds of residents for hearings at MS 50 on Jan. 17 and Feb. 16 and for the citywide Feb. 9 Panel for Educational Policy meeting, the groups have held marches and press conferences. They forced a meeting with Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott and started a lawsuit against the imposition of SA where it is not desired. Concluding that the PEP is undemocratic by design and constantly approves the mayor's wishes, El Puente youth led a creative protest-boycott outside the March 1 PEP meeting. However, PEP's vote was in favor of SA, with more abstentions than usual.

Clearly, there is a need for people's power to improve education. In many circles, discussions are occurring about how to eliminate mayoral control and create accountable, representative bodies to run the schools. Forces within the United Federation of Teachers are working to push the union toward a more confrontational stance and to encourage the rank and file to do more than what the leaders recommend. The fight for public schools must continue in the courts and legislatures but also in the streets and especially, in the schools themselves.

See a video on the SA battle at http://tinyurl.com/7uytxt2. □

Outside PEP hearing. PHOTO: GOTHAMSCHOOLS.ORG

SPEAK OUT! – FIGHT FOR JOBS HOUSING, EDUCATION, END ALL SOCIAL INEQUALITIES STOP THE ENDLESS WARS & THEIR ROOT: CAPITALISM

New political space has opened due to the momentous eruption of the Occupy Wall Street Movement and its slogan "the 99% vs. the 1%." This movement continues despite massive repression organized by Homeland Security.

To respond to this repression and to fight back, a People's Struggle for our basic needs and rights is needed, with a program appealing to all workers, especially workers of color who face disproportionate levels of poverty and repression.

The rich get richer. They continue to put profits before people. We need a struggle for People's Power to win our basic rights.

The National Tour on building PEOPLES POWER will begin this discussion. It will not just be in union or community halls, it will also be in the streets. We have to march and demonstrate during this election year, to expose the lie that politicians represent the people's concerns.

The pro-war, pro-Wall Street agendas of the two corporate parties at the Republican & Democratic Party Conventions in August and September 2012

Rally supports Occupy Wall Street

A march and rally were held at New York City's Union Square on Feb. 28 demanding, "Don't Suppress Occupy Wall Street." Several hundred people gathered, many of them joining as they came home from work or before getting on nearby subway trains.

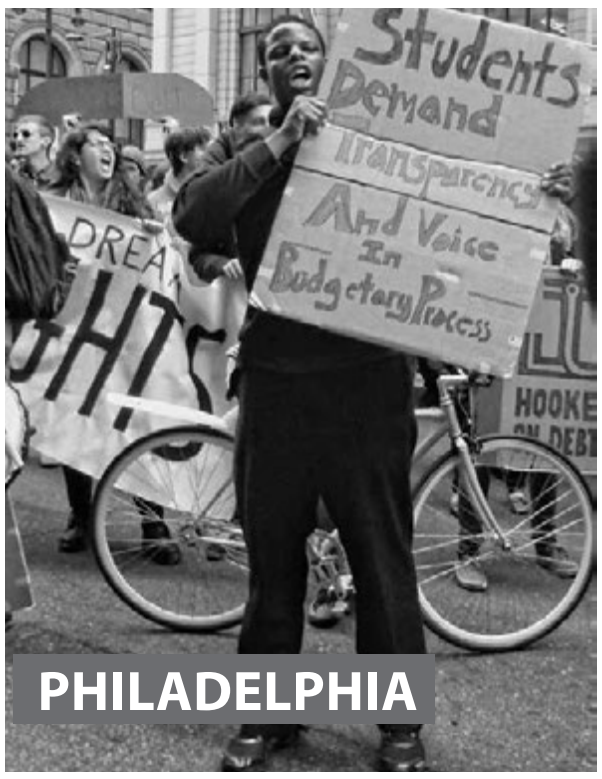
Speakers included Academy Award-winning actor Susan Sarandon and Rev. Stephen Phelps of Riverside Church. There were musical performances by Peter Yarrow of famed trio Peter, Paul, and Mary, as well as the hard-rock, hip-hop band Outernational. Desiree Deloach, a Zuccotti Park resident, gave a first-hand account of the brutal police raid on Nov. 15. Many involved in OWS's "Stop Stop & Frisk" campaign of civil disobedience were present.

Workers World Party supporters carried a banner reading, "Expand Occupy Wall Street! Shut Down Capitalism! Fight for Socialism!" The response to the banner by OWSers and activists was universally supportive.

— Caleb T. Maupin

Workers, students fight cuts

By Michael Ladson



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

On March 1, hundreds of students from Philadelphia area colleges, including Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University, rallied and marched to protest massive state cuts to education.

Speakers raised issues including discrimination in hiring for construction on the Temple University campus and the need for solidarity among the surging student movements around the planet.

The demonstration drew in participants off the street, including high school students. Public universities like Temple face the prospect of upwards of a 50 percent reduction in state aid under Gov. Tom Corbett, who has called for outright privatization of state schools.

After a spirited rally outside Corbett's Center City office, demonstrators marched to a concluding rally on the steps of the school district headquarters, where they joined Philadelphia school nurses laid off from their jobs in December 2011. Since then, the nurses and supporters from Occupy Philadelphia have demonstrated every Wednesday outside the school district building under a campaign called Occupy 440.

Earlier in the day, American Federation of Teachers Local 2026, representing faculty and staff at the Community College of Philadelphia, staged a rally for a fair contract on their campus that included students, staff, faculty, and other union and community supporters. □

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Save 200,000 Union Jobs!

Stop Union Busting, Privatization & Racism!

Union Square Rally 14th & Broadway, Manhattan

Sat. March 17, 12 Noon

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Community/Labor United for Postal Jobs & Services

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Women demand dignity

Why 'Viola Davis was robbed' of an Academy Award

Viola Davis

By Monica Moorehead

Based on a talk given at a March 2 Workers World forum in New York City. Hear and read the entire talk at www.workers.org.

At the 84th Academy Awards ceremony Feb. 26, a stunning, brilliant female actor, Viola Davis, lost to another brilliant female actor, Meryl Streep, for the best lead actress award. Davis is African American and Streep is white. Due to the predominance of social media and communication, this development fueled not just a national debate but a worldwide debate. There were many tweets saying, "Viola Davis was robbed."

Davis was actually considered a frontrunner to become only the second African-American actor to win the best actress award. She won the Screen Actors Guild and Broadcast Critics awards in the same category at the end of January for her role in "The Help." Her co-star, Octavia Spencer, won the SAG and BC awards for best supporting actress as well as this year's Academy Award in the same category. SAG also bestowed its best ensemble award for the cast of "The Help," composed of Black and white female actors.

Davis and Spencer played domestic workers based on the best-selling book, "The Help," which came out in 2009. The book focuses on recollections by a white author, Kathryn Stockett, who secretly conducted interviews with African-American domestic workers about their experiences working in white homes — including her own — in Jackson, Miss., during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The director of the film, Tate Taylor, and the film's producers are also white.

The book and the movie have ignited a lot of debate about how race relations — including how Black characters are portrayed — are interpreted through the skewed prism of white writers, directors and producers. While there has been a lot of criticism of the film, there has also been praise for it. For instance, when Octavia Spencer won the Oscar, a multinational group of women from the National Domestic Workers Alliance cheered while watching the ceremony on TV. When Streep won, they all moaned and groaned.

Davis and Spencer have both publicly defended their choices of playing domestic workers, saying they wanted to show the humanity of their characters who were denied their voices due to Southern racism. Davis agonized for three months before taking the role because of the criticism she anticipated for playing a domestic worker. In numerous interviews the actor has stated the difficulty she has had in being offered multifaceted lead roles because of being "dark-skinned." She describes the roles she is offered as mainly negative stereotypes of Black women in urban areas.

Putting aside the broad spectrum of views about this film, it has helped to shine a bright light on important broader social issues, which Viola Davis stated in her acceptance speech at the BC ceremony: "Racism and sexism are about all of us, not just people of color."

'A good, old white boys' club'

On Feb. 19, the Los Angeles Times published an extensive study entitled "Unmasking the Academy: Oscar Voters Overwhelmingly White, Male," which exposed institutionalized racism. The article stated that out of the 5,765 voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 94 percent are white and 77 percent are male. The eight-month study was based on interviews of Academy members and their representatives which helped to confirm the identity of 89 percent of the present membership.

The Academy includes selected people who work in front of and behind the camera. Only 2 percent are Black and less than 2 percent are Latino/a. Is it any wonder there have only been five African-American actors in the Academy's 84-year history to win best lead actor awards? They are Sidney Poitier, Denzel Washington, Jamie Foxx and Forest Whitaker; Halle Berry is the only African- American woman. This is truly a travesty.

Out of the Academy's 15 branches, whites compose 90 percent of each branch, except for the acting branch, which is 88 percent white. The Academy's executive and writer branches are a startling 98 percent white. The cinematography and visual effects branches are 95 percent white.

Sexism is also rampant within the Academy. According to the Writers Guild of America, women made up a mere 17 percent of employed writers in 2011. Martha Lauzen, in a San Diego State University study, stated that in 2011, women made up 18 percent and 9 percent of the Academy's producer and director branches, respectively.

The median age of all Academy voters is 62. Fourteen percent of voters are under the age of 50. The study went on to say that Academy membership is for life, whether members still work or not. Hundreds have not worked in many years, though close to 50 percent of Academy actors have worked within the past two years.

Out of the 43 members of the Academy's powerful Board of Governors, only six are women, one of whom is the only person of color on the board.

The Academy reflects the racism and sexism that is prevalent throughout U.S. capitalist society, from those who control Wall Street's profits to those who dominate the big-business parties of the Democrats and Republicans. The Academy has only paid lip service to promoting affirmative action throughout the film industry for people of color and women since it was founded in 1927.

Upon hearing about the Los Angeles Times' expose of the Academy, Denzel Washington stated, "If the country is 12% black, make the academy 12% black. If the nation is 15% Hispanic, make the academy 15% Hispanic. Why not?" (Los Angeles Times, Feb. 19)

The Academy also has a history of reflecting reactionary political positions. For instance, Streep's portrayal of the Reaganite, anti-worker Thatcher was an attempt to rehabilitate the former British leader from a moral point of view.

In 2010, Kathryn Bigelow was the first woman director to win an Oscar for her pro-Iraq war film, "The Hurt Locker." Bigelow is currently shooting a film based on the Navy Seals' capture of Osama bin-Laden.

Few roles, few nominations

It has been a long, uphill battle for African-American actors, especially female, to play nonstereotypical roles, much less to be recognized by the Academy for those roles. Hattie McDaniel was the first African American to win an Academy Award in 1940. Her best supporting actress Oscar was for playing a stereotypical house slave in the pro-Confederate movie, "Gone with the Wind," which won other Oscars, including best picture. McDaniel, a great dramatic actor, was forced to play demeaning roles as domestic workers during the so-called "Golden Age of Hollywood" until her death in 1952.

It took 47 years for Berry to win the first Oscar for lead actress after Dorothy Dandridge became the first Black woman to be nominated in the same category in 1955 for "Carmen Jones." Berry won for her role in "Monster's Ball," portraying a

ANNA MAY WONG

Chinese-American actor stood up to Hollywood racism

By Edward Yudelovich

The U.S. motion picture industry has a record of advocacy of imperialist wars, racism, sexism and all forms of bigotry. This was the obstacle course through which Anna May Wong — star of more than 50 films and the first Chinese-American star of her own TV show — had to navigate.

Wong's career was obstructed by racist laws prohibiting her from sharing an on-screen kiss with any person of another race — even if the character was Asian but being portrayed by a white actor. Tired of being both typecast and passed over for lead Asian character roles in favor of non-Asian actors, Wong left Hollywood in 1928 for Europe.

Interviewed by Doris Mackie for Film Weekly in 1933, Wong stated: "I was so tired of the parts I had to play. There seems little for me in Hollywood, because, rather than real Chinese, producers prefer Hungarians, Mexicans, American Indians for Chinese roles."

Just as the great African-American entertainer and Civil Rights activist Josephine Baker received greater respect for her art when she left the racist U.S. for Europe, Wong became a sensation, starring in such notable films as "Schmutziges Geld" ("Song and Show Life," 1928) and "Großstadtschmetterling" ("City Butterfly").

Wong began using her newfound celebrity to make political statements, including harsh criticism of the 1931 Mukden Incident and Japanese imperialism's subsequent invasion of Manchuria. She also became outspoken in her advocacy for Chinese-American causes and for better film roles. In a 1933 interview for Film Weekly entitled "I Protest," Wong criticized the negative stereotyping in "Daughter of the Dragon," "Why is it that the screen Chinese is always the villain? And so crude a villain — murderous, treacherous, a snake in the grass! We are not like that. How could we be, with a civilization that is so many times older than the West?"

Wong returned to the U.S. in June 1935 with the goal of obtaining the role of O-lan, the lead female character in MGM's film version of Pearl Buck's novel, "The Good Earth." Instead Wong was offered the part of Lotus, a character described as being deceitful because she helped to destroy the family. Wong refused the role because of the unsympathetic character she was asked to play.

Despite the fact that Buck had intended the film to be cast with all Chinese or Chinese-American actors, producer Irving Thalberg's assistant, Albert Lewin, after testing Anna May and other Chinese actors, argued that despite their ethnicity, they did not fit "his" conception of what Chinese people looked like. Instead he selected German actress Luise Rainer for the role of O-lan, for which she won her second consecutive Academy Award.

In the 84-year history of the Academy, no female Chinese American or woman of Chinese descent has ever won the Oscar in the best actress or best supporting actress categories.

In 2007, Asian-American filmmaker Elaine Mae Woo paid tribute to Wong's legacy and perseverance with the acclaimed documentary "Anna May Wong: Frosted Yellow Willows, Her Life, Times and Legend." ("Frosted Yellow Willows" is Wong's birth name in English.) □

woman who had an affair with a white jailer who executed her spouse.

The Oscar-nominated Black female actors who were passed over for best lead Oscars beside Dandridge and Davis include Angela Bassett, Diana Ross and the legendary Cicely Tyson for her beautiful portrayal of a sharecropper's spouse in "Sounder."

This kind of racism is no mistake or unfortunate coincidence. It is a reflection of the broader, historic issue of racism within the Academy, which reflects the entire Hollywood film industry, especially those who make the critical decisions of which films are made and which ones don't get made.

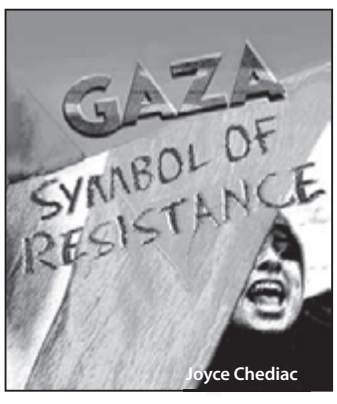
Who controls the purse strings?

African-American actor Danny Glover, who has been on the front lines in support of the Cuban Five, is preparing to direct his first film on Toussaint L'Ouverture, the former slave and leader of the Haitian revolution that overthrew the French slavocracy (1791-1804). Glover has publicly stated that it has been very difficult to raise millions of dollars for this important film because producers complained there were "no white heroes" in it. (AFP, July 25) Fortunately, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela has helped raise the bulk of the funds for Glover's project, which is scheduled to be filmed in Venezuela this year.

The great Lena Horne wanted to play the coveted role of Julie, a so-called mulatto, in the movie musical "Show Boat," but she was turned down. The role went instead to Ava Gardner, who darkened her face with makeup. Horne stated this snub was a devastating blow to her acting career.

In 2009, the Academy bestowed white actor Robert Downey Jr. an Oscar nomination for imitating a Black man in black face. This year's emcee of the Academy Awards, Billy Crystal, a white man, portrayed Sammy Davis Jr. in black face. These are just a few examples of the racist indignities woven into the fabric of Hollywood and its institutions.

In the short run, there needs to be a radical shake-up within Hollywood, including of the Academy ranks to make it more multinational in front of and behind the camera. In the long run, only with a revolutionary transformation of society — a socialist society based on human needs not profits — will those with talent and without talent be able to express themselves freely without the constraints of bigotry in all areas of life including culture. □



GAZA: Symbol of Resistance

A book of articles from WW, edited by Joyce Chediac

The story of how Gazans withstood blockade and bombardment, refusing to give up the right to determine their own lives and to choose their government; how Gaza's courage inspired solidarity ; exposes the forces behind the punishment of Gaza.

Available at Amazon and bookstores around the country.
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Interview with woman chief

Indigenous people in Panama defend their resources

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Cacica [Chief] Silvia Carrera and Ngäbe-Buglé people in struggle. PHOTO: CARRERA FACEBOOK PAGE

Without getting publicity in the United States, a struggle opposing U.S. corporate interests is brewing in Central America. An Indigenous woman, Cacica [Chief] Silvia Carrera is leading this struggle.

Last Sept. 11, Carrera was popularly elected chief of the Ngäbe-Buglé, Panamá's largest Indigenous nation, located on the northwest coast, close to Costa Rica. Comarca [region] Ngäbe-Buglé is one of Panamá's nine provinces. This region is the largest of the five Indigenous comarcas that have local administration and local rules concerning the use and protection of their natural resources.

Background of the conflict

The current struggle is the result of the latest of a series of attacks against Panamá's Indigenous people. It involves the government's plans to exploit copper mines and establish hydroelectric power plants to benefit mostly transnational corporations at the expense of the environment, the land and the survival of the 200,000 Ngäbe-Buglé people who inhabit the region.

In 2010, the right-wing U.S. ally, Panamá President Ricardo Martinelli, approved a "reform" modifying more than 60 laws from the Ngäbe-Buglé Organic Charter, effectively annihilating this people's political autonomy.

A year ago, Martinelli proposed to the National Assembly that they reform the Mine Law so as to lease to foreign interests a large copper ore mine, Cerro Colorado, which lies in Ngäbe land. The Ngäbe-Buglé people, with support from most of Panamá's social movements, defended their autonomy in February 2011 by blocking the Pan-American Highway. Defying terrible state repression that cost several lives, the Ngäbe-Buglé prevailed, forcing an agreement that prohibited mining and hydroelectric power projects in the comarca.

This victory was short-lived. As usual, the government broke its word. The Ngäbe-Buglé people once again rose up. For six days they blocked the Pan-American Highway to force the government to the negotiating table, but on Feb. 5, Martinelli again ordered police violence against thousands of residents who were blocking the road, killing two people, injuring dozens and detaining many.

This ongoing struggle is crucial not only for Panamá's Indigenous people but for all poor and working people there. This struggle for self-determination and against national oppression also targets capitalism and imperialism and all their crimes.

Interview with Cacica Silvia Carrera

Late Saturday night, Workers World/ Mundo Obrero had the privilege of conversing for an hour with Cacica Carrera. The cacica showed great interest in publicizing her people's struggle to the international community, even after a day spent in continual meetings and despite the late hour.

Carrera had just left a meeting at the U.N. office in Panamá City, where, she said, an attempt to re-establish negotiations with the government through the mediation of the U.N. and others seemed to start on a fruitful note. Two days before, through a press conference, she had made two central demands to the government: To hold meetings in a neutral place and that President Martinelli himself, with a new team, be part of the dialogue.

This woman, a personification of dignity, has faced constant humiliation by the government and its corporate media. She speaks clearly and without ambiguities, displaying a persistence through all her actions for her vision of justice and equality for her people, and by extension, for all Panamanians.

Asked about the meeting's purpose, she said: "We had to call the mediator and the U.N. observer because the government had not responded to our demands. They [the government] just say that the dialogue is important, but they do not act. We were very worried and asked the mediator if the government had made a statement yet, but they said they did not know.

"We then proposed that the meetings be held at the U.N. office, so they called the government, and it accepted. ... The only thing that both sides agreed to was to establish two 'mesas' [negotiating teams by topic].

"One would address Article 5, which allows for mining exploitation inside the comarca and adjacent regions, which our people reject and had to demonstrate against to show our opposition," the cacica said. "The other mesa is to discuss the hydroelectric power plant that is under construction."

Martinelli refuses to cancel the hydroelectric power plant, stating that it will benefit the people of Panamá. Carrera commented on this: "He refuses because the government has interests in these resources. It is not true that it will benefit the people. Look, right now we know that there are 1,700 megawatts being generated, and you know how many are used? Only 1,200! And the remaining 500, they sell to other countries. That is why the government is so interested. Panamá, so small, is full of hydroelectric power plants.

"The same thing is true about mines," she continued. "So, it is not necessary for the country. For these companies, the life of the human being has no value or protection."

WW/MO asked the cacica about a map she had put on her Twitter account reflecting the three hydroelectric power projects that the Ngäbe-Buglé people demand be cancelled.

"Many entrepreneurs come from the outside, from the USA, Honduras, Canada, from different countries," she answered. "And with the government here, there is a tiny group of about 10 people."

One of the three plants is operated by the AES Changuinola S.A. Its website shows that it is part of "the operations in Latin America, of AES Corporation, one of the world's largest global energy businesses," and it boasts, "The AES Corporation is a global power company with generation and distribution businesses" that employs "our diverse portfolio of thermal and renewable fuel sources" to deliver energy to 27 countries through a workforce of 27,000 people. (www.aes.com)

The U.S. government states that "Panamá is one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America, expanding 6.2 percent in 2010, with similar annual growth forecast through 2015." (www.ustr.gov)

This economy's expansion, however, is not benefiting the vast majority of the population, and much less the Indigenous people. Government figures show that 84.2 percent of the Indigenous population in Panamá lives below the poverty level. For the Ngäbe-Buglé, the poorest people, the poverty rate is even higher.

Poverty, education, health care

Cacica Carrera spoke about social conditions: "The millions of dollars that come to Panamá are only for a few small groups. We have serious problems here in Panamá. Everything is more expensive, basic food and necessities. Martinelli's government has privatized education, there is no freedom for institutions, and everything is conditioned.

"They talk about billions and billions, but the Ngäbe-Buglé people have not benefited," she said. "Our children are discriminated against. They cannot speak Spanish, so they cannot learn. Therefore, they have no opportunities. If they are given scholarships, they cannot make use of them because they cannot speak Spanish. There are no schools. They are too far away. Children have to walk four or five hours, cross the river, and if it is swollen, then they cannot go.

"Infant mortality is very high," she added. "We have no health centers in the comarca. The health centers have no personnel or medicines. People who are very sick and need medical treatment have to walk three, four, even five days to get to a health center."

When asked about women's role, she replied: "The role of women is to be constantly in the struggle."

Note: For the complete interview, visit Mundo Obrero at MundoObrero.org or write to bjceci@workers.org

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Syria, McCain & Clinton

Sometimes, to understand a world event, it helps to stand back. Sometimes it even helps to examine the event from the point of view of the enemies and oppressors of humanity. That's what we're doing this week. We look from afar to see the contending forces in Syria.

For what is at stake in the struggle over Syria is not simply the fate of individuals in a neighborhood in Homs, nor simply of those who make up the government and ruling circles in Damascus, nor even of all the 23 million people living in that country. Syria as a country, the Syrian army and the Syrian state are central to an entire region, an oil-rich region that world imperialism has targeted for conquest. And that impacts the entire world.

In particular, the outcome in Syria will have a direct effect on two of Damascus' allies in the region: Iran and the revolutionary Hezbollah movement in Lebanon. A more distant Syrian ally is Russia, which is able to land its ships in Syrian ports.

From the viewpoint of the main oppressors and exploiters of humanity -- of whom the most powerful are located on Wall Street, in Washington and in the Pentagon -- Iran, the Syrian regime and the Hezbollah movement are enemies and are on the list of those to be eliminated, simply because they refuse to submit to the rule of Western imperialism. The U.S. tolerates no independent actors. Thus both the Syrian and Iranian people face painful and punitive sanctions directed from Washington and seconded by its imperialist allies in Europe.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has labeled Syria's President Bashir al-Assad a war criminal and demanded he step down. Since she is held responsible for U.S. policy, she avoided calling openly for military intervention. She is aware that there are diverse elements in the Syrian opposition and that nearly all Syrians oppose foreign intervention. She is aware that a premature and open U.S. military involvement might boomerang.

She knows NATO-ally Turkey already backs the so-called "Free Syrian Army" and the reactionary Gulf emirates, while Saudi Arabia arms them. She chooses to soft-pedal U.S. strategy and let the corporate media continue to poison the world against the Syrian government while the Pentagon prepares an attack.

In contrast, Sen. John McCain speaks frankly. This militarist bombed Vietnamese people himself in the 1960s. He continues to be an enthusiast of U.S. air power. He championed the "surge" in Iraq, with what results? He cheered on the bombing of Libya last year, he wants to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan, and on March 5 he demanded air strikes on Syria -- strikes that would cause tens of thousands of deaths.

The imperialist Democrat Clinton and the imperialist Republican McCain both want Syria smashed.

WW opposes both these prophets of plunder: No to imperialist war on Syria. No to sanctions. No to intervention by the U.S. and NATO, including Turkey and the reactionary Gulf states. □

Haiti under U.N. occupation

Mass protest on anniversary of reactionary coup

By G. Dunkel

Over 10,000 supporters of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide marched in Port-au-Prince on Feb. 29 from Aristide's church to the Parliament and the ruins of the National Palace, passing through most of the city's poor neighborhoods, bastions of his support.

Aristide, a former priest elected twice to the presidency by the vast majority of Haitian voters, had been overthrown on Feb. 29, 2004, by a military coup organized and supported by the U.S., Canadian and French governments.

Ghetto-Unis, a coalition of parties including Aristide's party, Fanmi Lavalas, and other allied groups, had called this Feb. 29 action. As they marched, the demonstrators chanted, "Down with Martelly!" "Down with his secret army!" and [current President Michel] "Martelly must show his passports to Parliament!" (Agence Haitienne Presse)

Some progressive Haitian politicians have charged that Martelly has a U.S. passport, which under Haiti's Constitution would make him ineligible to be president. The Feb. 29 protest was the biggest anti-Martelly demonstration since the U.S. pushed his candidacy through the second round of vote counting in May of 2011.

Martelly ran on a promise to reinstate the Haitian army, which Aristide disbanded in 1995. Reuters and other press services have documented the presence of training camps where there are men dressed in khakis practicing with light and medium weapons around Port-au-Prince and other cities.

The Haitian army, created under the first U.S. occupation of Haiti in the 1930s, has from the beginning served as a weapon of Haiti's rulers against the poor, the peasants and the workers.

While this demonstration raised its demands against the politician Martelly, the growing misery of the Haitian people underlies the march. A half-million Haitians are still living in temporary camps under tattered tarps and cardboard, two years after the earthquake devastated Port-au-Prince. The already poor sanitation is worsening as is lack of access to clean water.

Most who have left the camps have returned to buildings so badly damaged they can't be repaired, though they are still standing. A project to clear the most prominent camp, the one in front of the National Palace, offers residents money to leave, but provides no place to go. Thus, by the time the hurricane season starts, at least 701 camps of the 702 total will remain.

So few Haitians have steady work that the unemployment figures are meaningless. Most people work as day laborers. If they don't find at least some work in a day, they go hungry.

The cholera that the U.N. forces brought into Haiti last year still continues to spread, a little more slowly in winter. Given the total lack of public sanitation, warmer weather will again make cholera a virulent scourge.

The demonstrators' anger was aroused partly because the Martelly regime was hinting that it might reinstate spurious charges of fraud and drug trafficking against Aristide, charges that were first raised by the post-2004 coup regime. No audit was done then — necessary in a fraud case — nor was there any evidence presented. Even the post-coup's kangaroo courts found the charges so far-fetched that they didn't pursue them. (Haïti-Liberté, Feb. 29).

The reaction to the charges in Haiti and from overseas Haitians was so vehement and quick that the Martelly government made haste to issue a formal denial of the "rumors" the day after they surfaced.

The Haitian people made their presence and their needs felt with the major demonstration on Feb. 29. Ghetto-Unis is planning on three more demonstrations in March: on March 8, International Working Women's Day; on March 18, the anniversary of Aristide's return; and on March 29, the day in 1987 that Haiti signed its Constitution. □

Support Rene's visit

Free the Cuban Five

By Cheryl LaBash

On Feb. 24, attorneys for René González of the Cuban Five filed a motion with Judge Joan Lenard in Miami requesting humanitarian permission to travel to Cuba for two weeks to visit his gravely ill younger brother, Roberto. González was released from prison on Oct. 7 last year after serving 13 years on a trumped-up conspiracy charge but is forced to remain in the U.S. — against his wishes — for an additional three years of supervised release.

To date, there has been no response from the court. The movement demanding freedom for the Cuban Five — Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González — has thus begun a phone and email campaign to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. Current information can be found at theCuban5.org and freethefive.org.

The Cuban Five were the eyes and ears of the Cuban Revolution in Florida at a time when counterrevolutionary elements planned hotel bombings and other violent attacks from U.S. territory and executed them in Cuba. These terrorist attacks were part of the continuing U.S. covert and overt moves for more than 50 years to destroy the self-determination and sovereignty of the Cuban people.

At a March 2 press conference call, attorney Phil Horowitz said that granting the type of humanitarian permission that González requested is customary and gave precedents for such international travel. The court must give permission, not the supervising probation officer. Horowitz himself has filed for such humanitarian international travel in other cases that have been approved, even for travel to Cuba.

Both González brothers were born in Chicago before the 1959 Cuban revolution and hold dual Cuban-U.S. citizenship. Roberto González, an attorney in Cuba, participated in the Cuban Five legal defense team.

The U.S. government has also refused entry visas for González's spouse, Olga Salanueva. The couple have not seen each other during his imprisonment or since his release.

Gerardo Hernández, who is still serving two life terms plus 15 years at the federal prison in Victorville, Calif., has also not seen his spouse, Adriana Pérez, whom the U.S. government prevents from even visiting him in prison.

Although the current request for the two-week travel permission is specifically linked to the late stage cancer illness of René González's only sibling, it highlights the 14 years of unjust imprisonment endured by all of the Cuban Five.

In a March 1 letter to his brother, González wrote:

"Today I've been remembering those great days from your time as a sportsman. You in the pool and us up in the stands, shouting your name as you swam. Our voices reached you intermittently, when you raised your head to breathe. ... So we trained ourselves to wait 'till your head was out of the water and then all shouted your name in unison. You couldn't see us, but the din we made told you we were with you, even if we couldn't intervene directly in the fierce struggle taking place in the swimming pool.

"History is now repeating itself. While you are committing all your efforts to this struggle, I am here cheering you on. ... You know that this brother, from his strange exile, from the sorrow of forced separation, under the most absurd conditions of supervised freedom, based on the dignity of his status as a Cuban patriot (like you) and on the affection nurtured by the ties of kinship and shared experience that unite us, is and always will be with you. Every time you raise your head, you'll be able to hear me shouting, together with my nephews and nieces.

"Breathe, brother, breathe!!" (antiterroristas.cu)

Justice demands the immediate and humanitarian release and return to Cuba of all of the Cuban Five. □

200,000 in Quebec demand:

'Education for ALL!'

Continued from page 1

of public health care, specifically the new obligatory health care fee for Quebec residents.

Responding to the blockade, police in riot gear used pepper spray and batons against protesters, mere steps away from the financial district park where Occupy Montreal was encamped last fall.

Demands driving the strike in Quebec are rooted in the struggle to ensure accessible education. As the Quebec student strike moves forward, however, students and other protesters in Montreal are taking steps not only against policies in Quebec, but are opposing capitalist politics in general. The student demonstrations have a potential to inspire a broader grassroots challenge to the austerity economics being unleashed by right-wing politicians across Canada. □

LIBYA

U.N. panel sanitizes U.S.-NATO war crimes

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

On March 2, the so-called U.N. Panel of Experts from the Human Rights Council issued a 200-page report on Libya, saying in essence that war crimes were committed by both the government led by Col. Moammar Gadhafi and the National Transitional Council forces that were put in power by the imperialist states. The report stated that Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 were justified and legitimate and that the Gadhafi administration deserved to be overthrown by the Western states and their allies.

According to the report, "In emergency session, the Human Rights Council on 25 February 2011 established the International Commission of Inquiry on Libya and gave it the mandate 'to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law in Libya, to establish the facts and identify those responsible, to make recommendations, in particular, on accountability measures, all with a view to ensuring that those individuals responsible are held accountable.'"

This same report continues, "International crimes, specifically crimes against humanity and war crimes, were committed by the Gadhafi forces in Libya. Acts of murder, enforced disappearance, and torture were perpetrated within the context of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population."

Yet no mention is made of the long-term plans by the U.S. to overthrow the Gadhafi government extending back at least to the early 1980s. Neither is there any reference to key players within the NTC forces trained by the Central Intelligence Agency and sent back into the country after rebel activities began on Feb. 17, 2011.

In an effort to sanitize the role of the imperialist naval blockade, CIA and MI6 destabilization efforts and the seven months of bombing that resulted in 26,000 sorties and nearly 10,000 air strikes, the U.N. report stated, "The Commission concluded that North Atlantic Treaty Organization conducted a highly precise campaign with a demonstrable determination to avoid civilian casualties. On limited occasions, the Commission confirmed civilian casualties and found targets that showed no evidence of military utility."

Therefore, the commission goes on to note that it "was unable to draw conclusions in such instances on the basis of the information provided by NATO and recommends further investigations." Nonetheless, the nation of Libya was a sovereign member of the U.N. and the African Union. Therefore it had a right to defend itself from both internal and external threats to its independence.

Absent any mandate from the people of Libya or the African Union, the NTC rebel regime is granted the cloak of legitimacy by the Human Rights Council. The commission report is audacious enough to assert, "The government [NTC] is gradually restoring the judiciary by reopening courts and recalling judges, and there has been some progress in the transfer of detainees to central government control."

However, on what legal and political basis is the NTC holding detainees, many of whom are Africans from other countries on the continent? How can the commission report ignore and therefore justify the wholesale theft and destruction of Libyan national assets? These include over $160 billion in foreign reserves and a highly lucrative oil and natural gas industry, which will now be exploited for the benefit of international finance capital and its allies inside Libya and throughout the region.

There is no demand that the detainees, along with former government officials, be immediately released and paid compensation for their suffering. In addition, there is no mention of the right of all people driven into exile as a result of the war to be allowed to return to Libya without fear of persecution or imprisonment.

Cover-up of Gadhafi assassination

Although the commission report admitted that atrocities are still being committed by the NTC regime, they attempt to link this to the legacy of the Gadhafi government. Yet there is no specific evidence of any mass killings or other abuse by the Gadhafi government that would have warranted the blanket bombing of the country or the overthrow of the previous state.

The commission said that it found no evidence of "mercenary forces" employed by the Gadhafi government, a major accusation made by the NTC "rebels" and publicized broadly by the corporate media. At the same time no mention was made of the role of Egyptian and Qatari special forces, CIA and MI6 operatives who worked to overthrow the Libyan government and engaged in war crimes against the population.

Perhaps the most egregious misrepresentation of the developments which took place in Libya during 2011 was the failure of the U.N. Commission to apportion blame on the U.S.-NATO forces or the NTC rebels for the brutal assassination of Gadhafi and other leading Libyan officials. Gadhafi was captured in Sirte, with only minor injuries after a convoy he was riding in was targeted by NATO war planes.

Just two days prior to the assassination of Gadhafi on Oct. 18, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had visited Tripoli and told the international press that the leader of Libya should be captured or killed. Libyan Col. Mansour Daw, now being held in a prison in Misrata, has confirmed that when Gadhafi was taken into custody by the NTC rebels on Oct. 20, he was suffering only minor injuries.

A report published by the Minneapolis Post recounts the last moments of the Libyan leader's life. The report notes, "Video footage ... shows Gadhafi being dragged from the [storm water] drain and brutalized by a mob of rebel fighters." (minnpost.com, March 5)

This same article points out, "His body arrived later in the city of Misrata along with that of his son Muttassim, but permission to examine the bodies or view the autopsy results was denied to UN representatives and human rights groups. Both bodies were buried by the transitional government in unmarked graves in an unknown location."

Even with this testimony and video evidence, the U.N. Commission concluded that there was insufficient proof to hold anyone accountable, not the U.S.-NATO military forces nor the NTC rebels, and that there should be further investigation into the assassination of Gadhafi.

In another effort to cover-up the blatant human rights violations against the Libyan people and its leaders, the United Nations Security Council in a Feb. 29 report quoted Ian Martin, chief of the U.N. Support Mission in Libya: "It is clear that the Libyan people are eager to move forward with the transition to democracy, and their most central expectation of the United Nations is that we will support them in doing so." (www.un.org, Feb. 29)

Despite all these efforts to distort the actual history of Libya over the last year, the people are resisting the onslaught of imperialist rule. It is they who will write the final chapter in this narrative. □

'No War on Iran'

Hundreds rallied outside the racist American Israel Public Affairs Committee Conference in Washington, D.C., on March 4, chanting as President Barack Obama's limousine drove by the dozens of protest signs. Combining support for Palestinian statehood and "No War On Iran" demands, protesters marched right up to the front steps of the Convention Center, where they spoke and chanted against the warmongers inside.

—Report and photo by Joe Piette

U.S. think tanks hear protest of plans for war on Iran

By John Catalinotto
New York

With President Barack Obama set to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on March 4, the Council on Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Magazine, two imperialist think tanks where U.S. strategists express their opinions and analysis, scheduled a "debate" on March 1 in New York City. The question to debate was, is it "Time to Attack Iran?"

With just a few days to organize, the American-Iranian Friendship Committee called a protest, which quickly drew support from other groups. Demonstrators surrounded the corner of 68th Street and Park Avenue for over an hour. They shouted out a "No to sanctions!" and "No to war against Iran!" whether led by the U.S. or by Israel.

Sara Flounders of the International Action Center was able to get into the meeting and all the way to the front row, where she stood up and interrupted the discussion. Later, on the outside, Flounders told the demonstrators, "I stood up and called out to the audience that both sides of this debate are war makers. One side demands bombing now, while the other is asking for sanctions to soften up and starve out the Iranian people." Flounders was ejected from the auditorium.

Among the other organizations supporting the demonstration were the Answer Coalition, the Baltimore-Washington Area Peace Council, the International Action Center, the Pakistan-USA Freedom Forum, SI Solidarity with Iran, the StopWarOnIran.org Campaign, WarISACrime.org — David Swanson, WESPAC and World Can't Wait.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Many of the same forces planned to protest on March 4 in Washington, D.C., at a meeting of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, at which both Obama and Netanyahu are speaking.

The anti-war groups will also hold a public meeting on "U.S. Sanctions as a Tool of War — The Case of Iran and Syria" on Saturday, March 10, at 6 p.m. The meeting will be at Grace & St. Paul's Church, 123 W. 71 St., New York, N.Y. For more information, see www.iranaifc.com or www.iacenter.org. □

MUNDO OBRERO

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EDITORIAL

Argentina vs Bretaña: tomando partido

El gobierno argentino presentó una protesta formal ante las Naciones Unidas el 10 de febrero sobre la militarización por Bretaña de las Islas Malvinas — el territorio en el Atlántico Sur que los británicos llaman las "Falklands". El canciller argentino dijo que los británicos desplegaron a la región un buque de guerra moderno, aviones de combate sofisticados y un submarino nuclear. Estos aviones pueden llegar hasta América del Sur sin tener que reabastecer el combustible.

Eso significa que se está gestando otro enfrentamiento por la posesión de estas islas. La última, hace 30 años, involucró una guerra entre Bretaña y Argentina que duró dos meses y costó la vida de 350 soldados británicos y 650 argentinos. La lucha actual implica no sólo orgullo nacionalista, sino el saqueo británico del petróleo en las aguas regionales.

La lucha de las Malvinas ha recibido poca cobertura de prensa en los últimos 30 años fuera de Argentina y Bretaña. Es importante examinar el asunto para explicar por qué es importante que los/as anti-imperialistas tomemos partido en la disputa por las Malvinas, tanto en 1982 como ahora.

Workers World/Mundo Obrero apoyó el reclamo de Argentina sobre las Malvinas en 1982, y hoy nuevamente lo hacemos. Esencialmente, esta lucha es entre Latinoamérica por un lado y el imperialismo británico — un socio menor del imperialismo estadounidense — por el otro.

Todos los países latinoamericanos y del Caribe han apoyado el derecho de Argentina sobre las Malvinas. También las organizaciones regionales de MERCOSUR, UNASUR, ALBA, CELAC, Grupo de los 77, además de China y el Movimiento de Países No Alineados, han hecho declaraciones en apoyo a la Argentina.

Es importante aclarar la naturaleza de esta confrontación. La pérfida oficina británica de asuntos extranjeros trata de disfrazar la acción de Bretaña a tener derecho al territorio en Latinoamérica con la defensa de la "autodeterminación" de los/as 3.100 habitantes de las Malvinas. Muchos/as de estos/as pobladores/as se identifican como británicos/as o al menos como una extensión de Bretaña.

Las Falklands, como los imperialistas las llaman, es una de las posesiones restantes del infame imperio británico que hasta la Segunda Guerra Mundial gobernó y saqueó gran parte del mundo.

El argumento británico es más o menos el mismo que el imperialismo estadounidense utilizó en Panamá antes de 1979 — EE.UU. tenía que mantener el control de la Zona del Canal de Panamá para defender la "autodeterminación" de los/as habitantes estadounidenses en la Zona, es decir, los/as ciudadanos/as estadounidenses que se establecieron en territorio panameño ocupado por EE.UU. alrededor del canal. O el mismo argumento del imperialismo francés que aduce tener que poseer Kanaky ("Nueva Caledonia") en el Pacífico Sur para defender los derechos de los/as colonos franceses en contra de los/as Canacos indígenas — y no para explotar los yacimientos de níquel en la isla.

La "libre determinación" para los imperialistas no es un principio de protección de los derechos de los/as oprimidos/as, sino un pretexto para ampliar el dominio imperialista.

Es esclarecedor examinar los acontecimientos de 1982. El régimen argentino era una junta militar que masacró una generación de jóvenes revolucionarios/as. Antes del conflicto, la junta tenía el apoyo total del imperialismo estadounidense, la complicidad de la CIA, y el apoyo sincero de la feroz anti-comunista Jeanne Kirkpatrick, entonces embajadora de EE.UU. ante la ONU.

Luego, el 2 de abril de 1982, la junta ordenó a las fuerzas armadas argentinas recuperar las Malvinas, que los británicos en enero de 1833 arrebataron al entonces nuevo e independiente gobierno argentino y que las ha poseído desde entonces.

Bretaña atacó. Después de una leve vacilación, las potencias imperialistas cerraron fila detrás de Bretaña. Hasta Kirkpatrick tuvo que renunciar a su pasada relación cercana a la junta militar argentina. El espionaje y las comunicaciones estadounidenses ayudaron a Bretaña. El imperialismo francés, que había vendido armas a la Junta, ayudó al ejército británico.

Fortalecida por su victoria en el Atlántico Sur, la primera ministra británica Margaret Thatcher, abrió fuego contra la clase obrera británica, especialmente contra los mineros. Por otro lado, la junta derrotada, pronto fue abolida por el pueblo argentino.

Las fuerzas progresistas y revolucionarias del mundo, a pesar de su odio a la Junta Militar argentina, apoyaron el derecho de Argentina a las Malvinas en 1982. Ahora nuevamente lo están haciendo y nos unimos a ellas. □

Teoría, acción y la historia

Líderes del Partido WW/MO hablan en Los Ángeles

Por John Parker

La crisis actual que enfrenta la clase obrera no es como ninguna otra, dijo Deirdre Griswold, editora del periódico Workers World en un foro en la oficina del Partido WW/MO en Los Ángeles el 18 de febrero. Citando cifras que muestran que la recuperación de las ganancias desde la crisis de 2008 no ha significado la recuperación para la clase obrera, Griswold, miembro de la Secretaría de WW/MO, explicó que el desempleo se ha convertido en una característica permanente del crecimiento del capitalismo de alta tecnología en todo el mundo.

Teresa Gutiérrez, líder nacional de WW/MO y miembro de la Secretaría, informó sobre el trabajo del partido en solidaridad con los/as trabajadores/as oprimidos/as, especialmente los/as inmigrantes.

Las dos charlas ilustraron cómo la crisis capitalista, mediante la imposición de cargas inmensas sobre cientos de millones de trabajadores/as, también ha sentado las bases para una mayor unidad de clase. Sin embargo, la crisis ha sido especialmente dura para quienes ya estaban más oprimidos/as. Ya sea que la gente esté luchando contra las ejecuciones hipotecarias y los desahucios, despidos, salarios bajos, deportaciones, guerras de intervención, contaminación del medio ambiente o los ataques a los servicios sociales básicos como la educación pública y la atención de la salud, el enemigo común del 99% es el 1% súper rico. Esta es la consigna principal del movimiento Ocupar, que ha inspirado a muchos/as activistas nuevos/as y ha provocado un renovado interés en el socialismo y el marxismo.

Gutiérrez mostró de manera concreta cómo el Partido Workers World /Mundo Obrero lleva a cabo el principio de la solidaridad con los/as trabajadores/as oprimidos/as. Siendo co-coordinadora y miembro del comité directivo de la Coalición 1 de Mayo por los Derechos de los/as Trabajadores/as e Inmigrantes en Nueva York, ella relató cómo la coalición está organizando una manifestación unitaria este año que abarca los grupos de inmigrantes, sindicatos y el movimiento de Ocupación.

Preguntas y discusiones profundas siguieron los informes. Miembros del Partido Comunista de EE.UU. y la Coalición de Inmigración del Sur de California contribuyeron con sus puntos de vista en el intercambio de ideas. Todos/as estuvieron de acuerdo al final de la noche con que sólo un movimiento independiente poderoso y unido de los/as trabajadores/as, oprimidos/as, y los movimientos de inmigrantes, sería capaz de progresar hacia el derrocamiento del capitalismo.

Más temprano, en una clase para los/as miembros y candidatos/as de WW/MO, Griswold, miembro fundadora del partido, revisó sus orígenes en el contexto del movimiento comunista mundial y la lucha contra el imperialismo y el neocolonialismo. Ella trazó la perspectiva política del partido y la orientación de la lucha, comenzando con los primeros escritos de Karl Marx y Federico Engels, hasta la victoria de la revolución bolchevique. Hizo hincapié en que las nuevas condiciones que los/as trabajadores/as y oprimidos/as en todo el mundo enfrentan hoy en día están empujando la lucha para derrocar el capitalismo y construir un mundo mejor, libre de explotación y represión. □

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